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REPORT BY THE
COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES

WIDE AREA ANTIARMOR MUNITIONS:
TERMINATE ONE SYSTEM AND REVIEW
TWO OTHERS

D I G E S T

To assist in countering the Warsaw Pact's numerical armor advantage, the tactical air forces must be capable of delaying or preventing the enemy from moving to the central battlefield. To do this, they need weapons that can destroy several armored vehicles each time the attacking aircraft passes over a target area. The Air Force expects the Wide Area Antiarmor Munitions (WAAM) program to provide weapons that have a high-multiple-kill-per-pass capability. However, one of the systems being considered should be terminated because it will not meet minimum requirements, and the other two systems rely on new unproven technology and involve weapons delivery concepts that have not been demonstrated.

WAAM is a family of area munitions being developed to provide the tactical air forces a multiple-kill capability against tanks, armored personnel carriers, self-propelled artillery, and support vehicles. Specifically, a plane loaded with the munitions should kill several target vehicles per pass in day, night, and adverse weather operations. Also, to increase aircraft survivability, the weapons must be capable of being delivered from stand-off positions or at low altitudes without the pilot visually seeing the target. (See p. 1.)

The present WAAM program consists of the (1) Antiarmor Cluster Munition, which is in full-scale development, (2) Extended Range Antiarmor Munition, which recently completed the validation phase, and (3) Wasp, which is in its third year of the validation phase. That phase is expected to be completed in May 1983. The overall program cost estimate total \$10.5 billion--\$895 million for research and development, \$9,191 million for procurement, and \$407 million for support. (See pp. 1 to 3.)

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FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Antiarmor Cluster Munition is an unguided cluster bomb of 48 submunitions packaged in the Air Force's Tactical Munitions Dispenser. This system, delivered by attack aircraft like the F-16, was to provide an interim near-term capability. It was envisioned as a low-cost, low-risk munition. However, according to Air Force and contractor studies, it will not provide the Air Force the capability it needs, it will not perform as required, and it is little or no better than munitions in the existing inventory and other near-term antiarmor systems. (See pp. 7 and 8.) In addition, it is 18 months behind schedule, and it will cost about \$865 million more than initially expected. (See p. 9.)

The Extended Range Antiarmor Munition and Wasp are the "smart," high-risk, long-term WAAM. They are being designed to detect and guide munitions to potential targets without exposing the delivery aircraft. While the Air Force expects these munitions to provide the capability it needs to counter the Warsaw Pact's armored threat, they

--rely on high-risk technology and involve new unproven operational concepts and

--need to be supported with advanced target location and command, control, and communications equipment to achieve optimum stand-off capability.

Although much validation and follow-on testing remains to be done, several technical and operational problems have already surfaced. In addition, both systems are behind schedule, and they will cost about \$6.3 billion more than initially expected. (See pp. 12 and 18.)

The WAAM program may eventually provide the tactical air forces a class of weapons to counter the Warsaw Pact's second echelon armor before it gets to the central battlefield. However, the Antiarmor Cluster Munition program should be terminated. As designed, it will not provide the multiple kills per pass the tactical air forces need, and it is little or no

better than inventory and other near-term antiarmor weapons. (See p. 11.)

It is too early to forecast success for the Extended Range Antiarmor Munition and Wasp. While they look promising, both systems involve new technology and operational techniques that have not been demonstrated. Before committing major funds to these programs, the Air Force should validate the critical technology and demonstrate that the operational techniques are feasible. (See p. 19.)

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense require the Air Force to validate critical technology and demonstrate operationally effective delivery concepts of the Extended Range Antiarmor Munition and Wasp before making major commitments of funds. (See p. 19.)

RECOMMENDATION
TO THE CONGRESS

In a letter of August 25, 1982, ^{1/} GAO informed the Secretary of Defense of the Antiarmor Cluster Munition's shortcomings and recommended that he direct the Secretary of the Air Force to terminate development of the Antiarmor Cluster Munition system and to report the amount of unobligated funds previously committed to its acquisition, which, as a consequence, might be used for other purposes.

By letter of November 4, 1982, the Under Secretary of Defense, Research and Engineering, informed GAO that the results of certain tests were still being analyzed. The letter indicated that a decision would be made on the termination issue by mid-December 1982 and that GAO would be notified of the decision. As of mid-January 1983, GAO was not notified.

GAO recommends that the Congress not appropriate any additional funds for the Antiarmor Cluster Munition system and require that the

^{1/}C-MASAD-82-22.

Secretary of Defense explicitly account for any unobligated funds previously appropriated for acquisition of this system. (See p. 11.)

AGENCY COMMENTS

The Department of Defense provided GAO with official oral comments, and the comments have been incorporated into this report as appropriate. These comments reflected general concurrence with GAO findings and recommendations. A few minor changes suggested by the comments have been incorporated to improve clarity.